



The VALIANTS of VIRGINIA

HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAUREN STOUT



SYNOPSIS.

John Vallant, a rich society favorite, suddenly discovers that the Vallant corporation, which his father founded and which was the principal source of his wealth, has failed. He voluntarily turns over his private fortune to the receiver for the corporation. His entire remaining possessions consist of an old motor car, a white bull dog and Damory Court, a neglected estate in Virginia. On the way to Damory Court, he meets Shirley Dandridge, an adventurous beauty, and decides that he is going to like Virginia immensely. Shirley's mother, Mrs. Dandridge, and Major Bristolow exchange terse sentences during which it is revealed that the major, Vallant's father, and a man named Ransom were rivals for the hand of Mrs. Dandridge in her youth. Ransom and Vallant fought a duel on her account in which the former was killed. Vallant finds Damory Court overgrown with weeds and croppers and the buildings in a very much neglected condition. He decides to rehabilitate the place and make the land produce a living for him. Vallant saves Shirley from the bite of a snake, which loses him. Knowing the fearfulness of the bite, Shirley sucks the poison from the wound and saves his life.

CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

"Listen, Shirley. What's that Ricker is telling Ransom?"

"Don't you come near him with your countenance! Cyan! Fool Ransom will no such snark story, nallah. Ain't no moon at Damory Court, on nebbah was!"

"There was too," insisted Ricker. "One big bug and Miss Shirley found him and sent Uncle Jefferson for Doctor Southall and it saved his life! So there! Doctor Southall told Mrs. Mason. And he isn't a man who's just come to fix it up, either; he's the really truly man that owns it!"

"Who on earth is that child talking about?"

Shirley put her arm around her mother and kissed her. Her heart was beating quickly. "The owner has come to Damory Court. He—"

The small book Mrs. Dandridge held fell to the floor. "The owner! What owner?"

"Mr. Vallant—Mr. John Vallant. The son of the man who abandoned it so long ago." As she picked up the fallen volume and put it into her mother's hands, Shirley was startled by the whiteness of her face.

"Dearest!" she cried. "You are ill. You shouldn't have come down."

"No. It's nothing. I've been shut up all day. Go and open the other window."

Shirley threw it wide. "Can I get your salts?" she asked anxiously.

Her mother shook her head. "No," she said, almost sharply. "There's nothing whatever the matter with me. Only my nerves aren't what they used to be. I suppose—and snakes always did get on them. Now, give me the gist of it first. I can wait for the rest. There's a tenant at Damory Court. And his name's John—Vallant. And he was bitten by a moccasin. When?"

"This afternoon."

Mrs. Dandridge's voice shook. "Will he—will he recover?"

"Oh, yes."

"Beyond any question?"

"The doctor says so."

"And you found him, Shirley—"

"I was there when it happened."

She had crouched down on the rug in her favorite posture, her coppery hair against her mother's knee, catching strange reddish overtones like molten metal from the shaded lamp. Mrs. Dandridge fingered her cane nervously.



But More Than Once Shirley Saw Her Hands Clasp Themselves Together.

ty. Then she dropped her hand on the girl's head.

"Now," she said, "tell me all about it."

CHAPTER XV.

The Anniversary.

The story was not a long one, though it omitted nothing: the morning fox-hunt and the identification of the new arrival at Damory Court as the owner of yesterday's stalled motor, the afternoon raid on the jessamine, the conversation with John Vallant in the woods.

Mrs. Dandridge, gazing into the fire, listened without comment, but more than once Shirley saw her hands clasp themselves together and thought, too, that she seemed strangely pale. The swift and tragic sequel to that meeting was the hardest to tell, and as she ended she put up her hand to her shoulder, holding it hard. "It was horrible!" she said. Yet now she did not shudder. Strangely enough, the sense of loathing which had been verging over her at recurrent inter-

vals ever since that hour in the wood, had vanished utterly!

She read the newspaper article aloud and her mother listened with an expression that puzzled her. When she finished, both were silent for a moment, then she asked, "You must have known his father, dearest; didn't you?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Dandridge after a pause. "I—knew his father."

Shirley said no more, and facing each other in the candle-glow, across the spotless damask, they talked, as with common consent, of other things. She thought she had never seen her mother more brilliant. An odd excitement was flooding her cheek with red and she chatted and laughed as she had not done for years.

But after dinner the gaiety and effervescence faded quickly and Mrs. Dandridge went early to her room. She mounted the stair with her arm thrown about Shirley's plant waist. At her door she kissed her, looking at her with a strange smile. "How curious," she said, as if to herself, "that it should have happened today!"

The reading-lamp had been lighted on her table. She drew a slim gold chain from the bosom of her dress and held to the light a little locket-brooch it carried. It was of black enamel, with a tiny laurel-wreath of pearls on one side encircling a single diamond. The other side was of crystal and covered a baby's russet-colored curl. In her fingers it opened and disclosed a miniature at which she looked closely for a moment.

Her eyes turned restlessly about the room. It had been hers as a girl, for Rosewood had been the old Garland homestead. It seemed now all at once to be full of calling memories of her youth.

"How strange that it should have been today!" It had been on Shirley's lips to question, but the door had closed, and she went slowly downstairs. She sat a while thinking, but at length grew restless and began to walk to and fro across the floor, her hands clasped behind her head so that the cool air filled her flowing sleeves. In the hall she could hear the leisurely kon-kon-kon-kon of the tall clock. The evening outside was exquisitely still and the metallic monotone was threaded with the airy fiddle-fiddle of crickets in the grass and punctuated with the rain-glad clasp of a frog.

Shirley stepped lightly down to the wet grass. Looking back, she could see her mother's lighted blind. All around the ground was splashed with rose-petals, looking in the squares of light like bloody rain. She skimmed the lawn and ran a little way down the lane. A shuffling sound presently fell on her ear.

"Is that you, Uncle Jefferson?" she called softly.

"Yes'm!" The footsteps came nearer. "It's me, Miss Shirley." He uttered noiselessly, and she could see his bent form vibrating in the gloom.

"Yo' reck'n Ah done fertit?"

"No, indeed. I knew you wouldn't do that. How is he?"

"He right much better," he replied in the same guarded tone. "Doctah he say he be all right in er few days, on'y he sotter lay up er while. Dat was er ugly nip he got fom dat 'spicable reptile."

"Do you think there can be any others about the grounds?"

"Noh. Dey mos'ly keeps ter de ma'shan' on on'y runs whah de undanbresh ez thick. I gwinter tell dat ter-morrow. Mars' Vallant he fix me ter grub at all out en make er bon-fiah ob it."

"That's right, Unc' Jefferson. Good night, and thank you for coming."

She started back to the house, when his voice stopped her.

"Mis' Shirley, yo' don't keer of de ole man geddahs two er three ob dem roses? Seems lak young mars' moughty fon ob dem. He got one in er glass but et's mos' dald now."

"Wait a minute," she said, and disappeared in the darkness, returning quickly with a handful which she put in his grasp.

"There!" she whispered, and slipped back through the perfumed dark.

An hour later she stood in the cozy stillness of her bedroom. She threw off her gown, slipped into a soft loose robe of maise-colored silk and stood before the small glass. She pulled out the amber pins and drew her wonderful hair on either side of her face, looking out at her reflection like a mermaid from between the rippling waves of a moon-golden sea.

At last she turned, and seating herself at the desk, took from it a diary. She scanned the pages at random, her eyes catching lines here and there. "A good run today. Betty and Judge Chalmers and the Pendleton boys. My fourth brush this season." A frown drew itself across her brows, and she turned the page. "One of the hounds broke his leg, and I gave him to Ricker."

"Chilly Lusk to dinner today, after swimming the Loring Rapid."

She bit her lip, turned abruptly to the new page and took up her pen. "This morning a twelve-mile run to Damory Court," she wrote. "This afternoon went for cape jessamine."

There she paused. The happenings and sensations of that day would not be recorded. They were unwriteable.

She laid down her pen and put her forehead on her clasped hands. How empty and insane these entries seemed beside this rich and eventful twenty-four hours just passed! What had she been doing a year ago today? she wondered. The lower drawer of the desk held a number of slim diaries like the one before her. She pulled it out, took up the last-year's volume and opened it.

"Why," she said in surprise, "I got jessamine for mother this very same day last year!" she pondered frowning, then reached for a third and a fourth. From these she looked up, startled. That date in her mother's calendar called for cape jessamine. What was the fourteenth of May to her?

She bent a slow troubled gaze about her. The room had been hers as a child. She seemed suddenly back in that childhood, with her mother bending over her pillow and fondling her rebellious hair. When the wind crept for loneliness out in the dark she had



"I'm Tempted to Stay Sick and Do Nothing but Eat."

sung old songs to her. Sad songs! Even in those pinafore years Shirley had vaguely realized that pain lay behind the brave gay mask. Was there something—some event—that had caused that dull-colored life and unfulfillment? And was today, perhaps, its anniversary?

John Vallant sat propped up on the library couch, an open magazine unheeded on his knee. The reading-stand beside him was a litter of letters and papers. The bow-window was open and the honeysuckle breeze blew about him, lifting his hair and ruffling the leaves of the papers. In the garden three dardies were laboring, under the supervision of Uncle Jefferson. The unsightly weeds and lichen were gone from the gravelled paths, and from the fountain pool, whose shaft now spouted a slender spray shivered by the breeze into a million diamonds, which fell back into the pool with a tinkling trickle and drip.

The master of Damory Court closed the magazine with a sigh. "If I could only do it all at once!" he muttered. "It takes such a confounded time. Four days they've been working now, and they haven't done much more than clean up." He laughed, and threw the magazine at the dog who dodged it with injured alacrity. "After all, Chum," he remarked, "it's been thirty years getting in this condition. I guess we're doing pretty well."

He stretched luxuriously. "I'll take a hand at it myself tomorrow. I'm as right as rain again now, thanks to Aunt Daph and the doctor. Something of a crusty citizen, the doctor, but he's all to the good."

A heavy step came along the porch and Uncle Jefferson appeared with a tray holding a covered dish with a plate of biscuit and a round jam-pot. "Look here," said John Vallant, "I had my luncheon three hours ago, I'm being stuffed like a milked turkey."

The old man smiled widely. "It's jes' er ill' snack er broth," he said. "Reck'n er'll kinder float eround de yuddah things. Dis' yeah pots dat apple-buttah whut Miss Mattie Sue sen' yo' by Ricker Snyder."

"Vallant sniffed with satisfaction. "I'm getting so confoundedly spoiled," he said, "that I'm tempted to stay sick and do nothing but eat. By the way, Uncle Jefferson, where did Ricker come from? Does she belong here?"

"No, suh. She come fom Hell's-Half-Acre."

"What's that?"

"Dat's dat ornery passle o' folks yondah on de Dome," explained Uncle Jefferson. "Dey's been dah long's Ah kin remembrah—jes' er ramshackle lot o' shiffless po'-white trash whut git erlong anyways 't all."

"That's interesting," said Vallant. "So Ricker belonged there?"

"Yas, suh; nebbah 'd a come down heah 'cep'in' fo' Mis' Shirley. She de one whut fotch de ill' gal outen dat place, en put huh wid Mis' Mattie Sue, three yeah ergo."

A sudden color came into John Vallant's cheeks. "Tell me about it."

"Well, suh," continued Uncle Jefferson, "dey was one o' dem low-down Hell's-Half-Acres, name's Greef King. Whut c'd heah' de mayah ob de Dome, on he went on de rampage one day, on tank shah his wife. She yas

er po' sickly 'ooman, wid er ill' gal five yeah ol' by er fust husband. He done beat huh heap o' times befo', but dis time he boun' ter finish huh. Ah reck'n he was too drunk fo' dat, en she got erway en run down heah. Et was wintah time en dah's snow on de ground. Dah's er road fom de Dome dat hits de Red Road clost' ter Rosewood—dat ar's de Dandridge place—en she come dah. Reck'n she wuz er pitiful-lookin' obstacle. 'Peahs lak she, done put de ill' gal up in de cabin lof en hid de laddah, en she mos' crazy fo' feah Greef git huh. She lef' he huntin' fo' de young 'un when she run erway. Dey was on'y Mis' Judith en Mis' Shirley en de gal Em' line at Rosewood. Well, suh, dey wa'n't no time ter sen' fo' men. Whut yo' reck'n Mis' Shirley do? She ain' afelah' o' nuffin on dis yert, en she on'y sebeten yeah ol' den, too. She don't tell Mis' Judith—no, suh! She run out ter de stable en saddle huh hoss, en she gallop up dat road ter Hell's-Half-Acre lak er shot outen er shovel."

Vallant brought his hands together sharply. "Yes, yes," he said. "And then?"

"When she come ter Greef King's cabin, he done foun' de laddah, on one er he fouts was on de ring. He had er ax in he han'. De po' ill' gal was peepin' down the o' de cracks o' de flo', en pravin' de bestes' she know how. She yas arterwuhds dat she reck'n de Good Lawd sen' er angel, fo' Mis' Shirley were all in white—she didn't stop ter change huh close. She didn't say nuffin. Mis' Shirley didn't. She on'y lay huh han' on Greef King's arm, en he look at huh face, en he drop he ax en go. Den she clumb de laddah en fotch de chile down in huh arms en take huh on de boss en come back. Dat de way et happen, suh."

"And Ricker was that little child?"

"Yas, suh, she sho' was in de maw'n' er posse done ride up ter Hell's-Half-Acre en take Greef King in. De majah he argy de case fo' de State, en when he done git tho', dey mos' put de tow eroun' King's neck in de co'ot room. He done got six yeah, en et mos' broke de majah's heah dat dey couldn't give him no mo'. He wuz cert'n' er bad ag, dat Greef wuz. Dey say he done swah he gwinter do up de majah when he git out."

Such was the story which Uncle Jefferson told, standing in the doorway. When his shuffling step had retreated, Vallant went to the table and picked up a slim toiled volume that lay there. It was "Lucile," which he had found in the hall the night of his arrival. He opened it to a page where, pressed and wrinkled but still retaining its bright red pigment, lay what had been a rose.

He stood looking at it abstractedly, his nostrils widening to its crushed splotch, then closed it and slipped it into his pocket.

CHAPTER XVI.

In Devil-John's Day.

He was still sitting motionless when there came a knock at the door and it opened to admit the gruff voice of Doctor Southall. A big form was close behind him.

"Hell Up, I see. I took the liberty of bringing Major Bristolow."

The master of Damory Court came forward—flipping the least trifle—and shook hands.

"Glad to know you, sah," said the



NO MORE MARRIAGE RISKS

Reformers of Today Certainly Are Throwing All Kinds of Safeguards Around the Ceremony.

Under the microscope of modern criticism marriage seems to be honey-combed with false ideas and tyrannous customs. So wrong is it that we almost doubt if any of our grandparents could have been happy, and we sigh with relief when we consider that at last modern intellect is about to demolish the old-fashioned methods and build in their place a scheme of common-sense marriage in which no sorrow and regret can cloud the domestic hearth.

What a primitive, careless thing marriage has been hitherto. Just because a man and a woman have been attracted to one another they have rushed blindly into a lifelong partnership without any careful forethought or inquiry.

But we see the end of all that nonsense. Already the new marriage—the careful, well-considered mating—has arrived. The first medically examined wedding has been celebrated in this country. Surely this will give a lead to the world.

In future the first consideration will be the medical certificate, and after that the certificate of temperament. No man and woman will enter the

major. "Allow me to congratulate you; it's not every one who gets bitten by one of those infernal moccasins that lives to talk about it. You must be a pet of Providence, or else you have a cast-iron constitution, sah."

Vallant waved his hand toward the man of medicine, who said, "I reckon Miss Shirley was the Providence in the case. She had sense enough to send for me quick and speed did it."

"Well, sah," the major said, "I reckon under the circumstances, your first impressions of the section aren't anything for us to brag about."

"I'm delighted; it's hard for me to tell how much."

"Wait till you know the fool place," growled the doctor testily. "You'll change your tune."

The major smiled genially. "Don't be taken in by the doctor's pessimism. You'd have to get a yoke of three-year oxen to drag him out of this state."

"It would take as many for me," Vallant laughed a little. "You who have always lived here, can scarcely understand what I am feeling. I imagine. You see, I never knew till quite recently—my childhood was largely spent abroad, and I have no near relatives—that my father was a Virginian and that my ancestors always lived here. Why, there's a room upstairs with the very toys they played with when they were children! To learn that I belong to it all; that I myself am the last link in such a chain!"

"The ancestral instinct," said the doctor. "I'm glad to see that it means something still, in these rotten days."

"Of course," John Vallant continued, "every one knows that no has ancestors. But I'm beginning to see that what you call the ancestral instinct needs a locality and a place. In a way it seems to me that an old estate like this has a soul too—a sort of clan or family soul that reacts on the descendant."

"Rather a Japanese idea, isn't it?" observed the major. "But I know what you mean. Maybe that's why old Virginian families hang on to their land in spite of hell and highwater. They count their forebears real live people, quite capable of turning over in their graves."

"Mine are beginning to seem very real to me. Though I don't even know their Christian names yet, I can judge them by their handiwork. The men who built Damory Court had a sense of beauty and of art."

"And their share of devilry, too," put in the doctor.

"I suppose so," admitted his host. "At this distance I can bear even that. But good or bad, I'm deeply thankful that they chose Virginia. Since I've been laid up, I've been browsing in the library here—"

"A bit out of date now, I reckon," said the major. "But it used to pass muster. Your grandfather was something of a bookworm. He wrote a history of the family, didn't he?"

"Yes. I've found it. 'The Vallants of Virginia.' I'm reading the Revolutionary chapters now. It never seemed real before—it's been only a slice of impersonal and rather dull history. But the book has made it come alive. I'm having the thrill of the globe-trotter the first time he sees the Tower of London or the field of Waterloo. I see more than that stultified old ronder; I see a big wooden stockade with soldiers in ragged buff and blue guarding it."

"(TO BE CONTINUED.)"

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Ironton, Ohio.—"I am enjoying better health now than I have for twelve years. When I began to take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound I could not sit up. I had female troubles and was very nervous. I used the remedies a year and I can do my work and for the last eight months I have worked for other women, too. I cannot praise Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound enough for I know I never would have been as well if I had not taken it and I recommend it to suffering women."



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"I gave it to my daughter when she was thirteen years old. She was in school and was a nervous wreck, and could not sleep nights. Now she looks so healthy that even the doctor speaks of it. You can publish this letter if you like."—Mrs. RENA BOWMAN, 161 S. 10th Street, Ironton, Ohio.

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Taking His Cue.

A small street urchin from the city, who was spending some time in a fresh air camp, was the source of considerable entertainment to members of the family at a farm where he frequently called for milk and apples.

"Whaddye think about the youngster, anyhow?" the farmer asked his wife, one evening.

"He's a nice little fellow," the wife replied, "but I can't just make him out."

"How make him out?"

"Every time grampaw sneezes 'sch' that boy ails laughs and yells, Ka Kibble!"—Judge.

ECZEMA ON BACK AND CHEST

Pierson, N. Dakota.—"The eczema started on my scalp. It finally went on to the back of my neck, then on to my back, arms and chest. It broke out in pimples first and then seemed to run together in some places, making a sore about the size of a dime. At times the itching and burning were so intense that it seemed unbearable. The more I scratched it the worse it became, and there would be a slight discharge from it, especially on my scalp, so as to make my hair matted and sticky close to the scalp. The hair was dry, lifeless and thin. My hair was falling so terribly that I had begun to despair of ever finding relief. My clothing irritated the eruption on my back. The affected parts were almost a solid scab."

"I had been bothered with eczema for about a year and a half. Then I began using the Cuticura Soap and Ointment. I used them daily for two months and I was cured." (Signed) Miss Mildred Dennis, Apr. 20, 1911.

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Queer.

There may be some statesmen who had rather be right than president, but there are others who seem to have no ambition in either direction.—Washington Herald.

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Whoops.

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"What Augusta?"

"Augusta wind."

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